

How to Survive Puppy Biting and Mouthing

Why Do Puppies Bite?

Puppy biting and mouthing is a perfectly normal behaviour. Puppies use their teeth to explore the world in a similar way to the way people use their hands. Often one puppy will invite another puppy to play by running up and nipping them.

Puppies can be particularly nippy when they are teething, in this case the puppy may show other signs such as drooling or you may see spots of blood on his toys.

It is important for your puppy to learn how to use his mouth politely and only chew things that he is allowed to chew.

When you first bring your puppy home everything will seem like a chew toy to him, including your hands and clothes. Puppies need to be taught what is appropriate to chew and what is not.



The first thing is to provide your puppy with some toys such as kongs that he is allowed to chew and make these more interesting by putting small amounts of food, cream cheese or peanut butter in them. These are toys your puppy can play with on his own and are different from toys you use to play with your puppy.

Try to keep things that you do not want your puppy to chew out such as shoes and valuable items like mobile phones well out of his way. If your puppy starts to show interest in chewing something you would rather he did not chew then redirect him onto a toy which he is allowed to chew.

A spray such as bitter apple can make things such as furniture or shoes less appealing to a puppy. The spray will need to be refreshed each day until your puppy stops wanting to chew in that area.

Some puppies find that nipping is a good way of getting attention and can run up and nip clothing or hands.

What should you do if your puppy is running up and nipping hands and clothing?

1. Give your puppy as little attention as possible. Stand very still, do not look at your puppy or laugh at him. When he lets go give him a toy that he is allowed to chew.
2. Stay calm. Many puppies that jump up and grab clothing are over excited any

movement or telling off from you might make him more excited.

3. Hand feed your puppy. Not only will this improve your bond with your puppy but it gives him a lot of opportunity to practice controlling his mouth. Hold a piece of food in your hand, do not let the puppy snatch at the food, but allow him to have it when he takes his teeth away and used his tongue or mouth. You can put this on a cue such as 'gentle' and use this to remind your puppy to be careful with his mouth.
4. Management tools such as a crate or stairgate can be useful to stop your puppy grabbing clothes.
5. Reward your puppy for being calm and not biting. For example while grooming your puppy keep rewarding him for not biting your hand or the brush.
6. Play appropriate games with your puppy using a toy. Any contact between your puppy's teeth and skin or clothing ends the game. You can end the game by slowly and calmly walking away.
7. Make sure your puppy is getting enough exercise and mental stimulation. A tired puppy will have less energy to put into biting.



There are also some things that you should not do

1. Try not to manhandle your puppy. This may be seen as an invitation to play and may make the biting worse.
2. Don't play rough games with your puppy that involve biting hands or clothes, use a toy instead.
3. Don't allow your puppy to engage in a game of tug with clothing, this will encourage him to think of clothing as a tug toy. Instead try to direct him onto a toy or another suitable item.
4. Don't punish your puppy for nipping, not only can this damage your relationship with your puppy but it does not teach him to chew appropriate things. In many cases it just redirects the problem to other family members.

Remember puppy biting can take time and consistency to solve.

Paws in Progress

Dog Training & Canine Massage Therapy